

**Advances in Technology** During the Han dynasty, China became the most advanced civilization in the world. Its government was stable, so the Chinese could turn their attention to improving their society. Some accomplishments of the Han dynasty are shown in the chart. For example, Chinese artisans began making iron farming tools. These were a great improvement over the stone hoes and plows that farmers had traditionally used. Under Han leadership, workers constructed vast irrigation systems. They developed new ways of farming. They also developed something the world still depends on every day—paper.

**Paper** To keep records, Mesopotamians had to carve their cuneiform characters in stone or press them into clay tablets. The Chinese had similar problems. The Chinese used wood scrolls. Later, they wrote messages and even whole books on silk. Then, around A.D. 105, the Chinese made one of their greatest discoveries. They invented paper. The first paper was made from tree bark, hemp, and old rags. It was strengthened with starch and then coated with gelatin, a gooey substance that gave it strength.

This invention influenced learning and the arts in China. After several centuries, the use of paper spread across Asia and into Europe. Eventually paper replaced papyrus from Egypt as the material for scrolls and books.

**Other Practical Inventions** During the Han dynasty, the Chinese invented many practical devices that did not reach Europe until centuries later. Among them were the wheelbarrow, the rudder (for steering boats), and the collar and harness that allowed animals to pull heavy loads.

The Han dynasty came to an end in the 200s A.D. But its accomplishments were not forgotten. People in China today call themselves “the children of Han.”

## SECTION 4 REVIEW

1. **Define** silk.
2. **Identify** (a) Sima Qian,  
(b) Silk Road.
3. Why did the influence of Confucius grow during the Han dynasty?
4. Name three accomplishments of the Chinese during the Han dynasty.

### Critical Thinking

5. **Recognizing Cause and Effect** What do you think was the most important achievement of ancient China? Why?

### Activity

6. **Writing to Learn** You are a historian in A.D. 2150. Write a brief description of the accomplishments of the United States in the late 1900s. Use these categories: Trade, Culture, Technology.